

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson****Working with Communities to Disrupt Terror Plots**

March 17, 2010 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Intelligence, Information Sharing & Terrorism Risk Assessment Subcommittee hearing entitled “Working with Communities to Disrupt Terror Plots”:

“This Committee is very focused on ensuring that American citizens can live their lives in safety and without fear. Terrorists – both international and domestic, both foreign born and “home grown” – want nothing more than to shatter our security and make us fearful. Thanks to the work of our dedicated homeland security and law enforcement professionals, with the guidance of this Administration and the careful oversight of this Committee, we can have confidence in our security.

As we have seen in just the past year in cases like Zazi, Headley, and Rana, we can stop terrorist plots dead in their tracks. Yet stopping terrorist plots is only one piece of freeing our fellow Americans from fear.

Freedom from fear also means that people should also not fear their government, and in particular should not fear the homeland security and law enforcement organizations that are working to provide their security.

Community engagement efforts offer other ways to free us from fear. For example, community engagement efforts can vary widely.

Many focus on helping communities understand homeland security or law enforcement policy, practices, or methods. Others help those who execute those policies and methods interact respectfully with the communities with which they deal. Fostering this kind of understanding is a sure way to help free communities from fear; it develops trust with law enforcement, confidence that they are also being protected, and a sense of participation and engagement.

Individuals should also be free from fear that they are subject to homeland security or law enforcement scrutiny because of the color of their skin or their religion.

We need look no farther than the recent example of Colleen LaRose – also known as “Jihad Jane” – to know that terrorists cannot simply be identified by gender, race, or national origin. We have learned the hard lesson that terrorists do not fit into a particular “type.” Terrorism does not always look the same; terrorists are not always the “usual suspects.”

Community engagement also helps free individuals from fear because it creates a critical dialogue between our homeland security and law enforcement agencies and individuals to help protect and preserve the civil rights and civil liberties. For that reason, I am particularly pleased that Margo Schlanger, the newly-appointed DHS Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, is here in her first Congressional appearance to speak about

her office's community engagement work.

I hope you and your colleagues on the panel today will highlight how your agencies' community engagement work helps free our citizens from fear that privacy, civil rights and civil liberties play second fiddle to homeland security and law enforcement efforts to root out terrorists."

# # #

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

**United States House of Representatives**  
Committee on Homeland Security  
H2-176, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515  
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499  
<http://homeland.house.gov>